

PARTNERS INITIATIVES

Filipino American Culture Through My Father's Eyes

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History and cultural heritage are not always communicated well through written descriptions. However, photographic documentation provides a visual point of reference and a connection on an emotional level. The combination of the two offers a comprehensive examination of the topic. *Through My Father's Eyes: The Photographs of Ricardo Ocreto Alvarado* offers visitors an informed look at life in the Pinoy (Filipino American) community in California in the 1940s and 1950s.

An amateur photographer, Ricardo Alvarado chronicled the Filipino community in and around the San Francisco Bay area through nearly 3,000 black and white photographs over the course of 20 years. *Through My Father's Eyes* is divided into four sections that address the Pinoy experience: "Manong Generation," "Second Generation," "Postwar Era," and "Diversity."

The curators, Janet Alvarado, the subject's daughter, and Franklin Odo of the Smithsonian Institution, weave the historical narrative of Filipino immigration and assimilation at a pivotal point in the 20th century into Alvarado's observations. Ordering of

the images in a thematic, but loosely chronological fashion enables Alvarado's lens to move visitors from the passing of the "manong," or older brothers in Luzon dialect, who came to work as agricultural laborers in Hawaii and on the western coast of mainland America or as domestics, through the relative prosperity of the postwar period.

The curators illustrate the Pinoy community's growing sense of security within society during the middle of the century with their choice of images and use of historical narrative. As Alvarado's images capture the transition from a society of bach-

elors to a community of families, the narrative fills in the blanks with a brief discussion on marriage and citizenship. (Marriage to whites was illegal—although some did take place—and the number of female Filipino immigrants was miniscule prior to World War II, so some Pinoy married outside of their community, primarily to Mexican women.)

Other Filipinos remained bachelors well into their forties, or until they could return to the Philippines to find a wife. Images of solitary Filipino men working in agricultural labor transition to those of Pinoy families at home and at play in Alvarado's work. The photographs show Pinoy community-sponsored events, such as "box" dances and beauty pageants. The narrative denotes the implicit prosperity and security of the community in these events.

(right) *Filipino migrant workers harvested bellpeppers, lettuce, celery, artichoke, and asparagus crops.* Photo courtesy of Ricardo Alvarado, the Alvarado Project.

(opposite page) *This portrait was taken during one of Alvarado's visits to a California farm area.* Photo courtesy of Ricardo Alvarado, the Alvarado Project.





Through My Father's Eyes illustrates the multicultural nature of the Pinoy experience. Residents lived and worked with African Americans, Latin Americans, and European Americans. Alvarado captures his neighbors in bars and stores, at social occasions, and in their places of business. One image of Pinoy and European Americans at a picnic is hung near another of Alvarado and his coworkers, black and Latino, in the Letterman Army Hospital kitchen. An interracial band performs at a party for the Pinoy community in the Bay area in another.

Alvarado's personal experience is reflected in the narrative arc of the exhibit. He arrived in the United States in 1928, working as a houseboy and janitor. After a stint in the U.S. Army First Filipino Infantry Regiment during World War II, he worked as a cook at Letterman Army Hospital at the Presidio in San Francisco. He returned to the Philippines in 1959 to get married. *Through My Father's Eyes* offers an

impressive view of Filipino Americans. The exhibit will travel the country in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES).

For more information, visit thealvaradoproject.com or www.apa.si.edu.

Forgotten Patriots Symposium

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Daughters of the American Revolution Library

On January 11, 2003, over 200 participants attended the *Forgotten Patriots: African American and American Indian Service in the Revolutionary War* symposium held at the national headquarters of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) in Washington, DC. The event was part of the DAR's desire to recognize the involvement of all patriots, regardless of color, in the Revolutionary War and to help illuminate their stories in the historical record.

The symposium was the result of a long-standing research project supported by DAR. In the mid-1980s, DAR staff sought to identify and document the names of African Americans and American Indians who joined in the war against Great Britain. A series of booklets were published in the 1980s and 1990s. After the completion of the final booklet in 2000, all of these compilations were gathered together, updated, and edited as a single volume. The resulting publication, *African American and American Indian Patriots of the Revolutionary War*, identifies some 3,000 individuals and provides references to the documented sources, which support their identification as patriots of the American cause during the period of the Revolutionary War, April 1775–November 1783.

With the completion of *African American and American Indian Patriots*, the DAR Museum decided to prepare an exhibit on the same topic. After securing the necessary personal effects and illustrative documents, the *Forgotten Patriots* exhibit opened at DAR headquarters in October 2002. The central feature of the exhibit is a series of large panels bearing the names of those patriots identified in the book. The exhibit will run through mid-August 2003 and is open to the public.

The symposium began with greetings from Linda Tinker Watkins, President General, National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution; Mark A. Gresham, President and CEO of the Black Patriots Foundation; and Keller George, President of the United Southern and Eastern Tribes. The speakers, session chairs, and commentators were well-known figures in the field of Revolutionary War history: Gary B. Nash, UCLA; Colin G. Calloway, Dartmouth College; Louis E. Wilson, Smith College; Debra Newman Ham,

Morgan State University; Gregory E. Dowd, University of Michigan; Greg O'Brien, University of Southern Mississippi; Andrew R. L. Cayton, Miami University; Sylvia R. Frey, Tulane University; Julie Winch, University of Massachusetts, Boston; Woody Holton, University of Richmond; Ira Berlin, University of Maryland; Warren Hofstra, Shenandoah University; John D. Garrigus, Jacksonville University; and Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, Rutgers University.

Among the topics covered were the role of Northern Indians, George Washington's relationship with Indians, the impact of the Revolution on the Choctaws, American Indian influences on the United States Constitution, African American patriots of Rhode Island, methods for identifying African American soldiers, the varied roles of black patriots in the struggle, and the French Colonial "free colored" volunteers in the Battle of Savannah. The idea of publishing the papers presented at the seminar is under investigation.

The DAR welcomes information documenting the roles of other African American and American Indian patriots in the Revolutionary War. The study of this important aspect of the history of the American Revolution continues daily at DAR by staff members who are proud to be involved in ensuring that this story is no longer forgotten.

For more information on Forgotten Patriots exhibit, visit <http://www.dar.org/museum/exhibitions.html>, or contact Nancy Gibson at 202/879-3238, e-mail: ngibson@dar.org.

Passages to Freedom Conference

Brian D. Joyner and Diane Miller
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The past two decades have seen a renewed interest in the Underground Railroad (UGRR), the

cultural phenomenon in which enslaved African Americans fled to freedom by their own means or with the assistance of sympathetic individuals of all persuasions: black, white, enslaved, and free. This has led to legislation from Congress to research and commemorate the UGRR, increased academic research on the topic, and new collecting institutions and organizations dedicated to preserving its legacy. Part of that legacy is the assertion of the historic merit and veracity of the UGRR. On February 27-March 1, 2003, "Passages to Freedom: The Underground Railroad in American History and Legend" Conference, Community Tribute, and Cultural Fair convened in Washington, DC "to increase the public awareness of both the written and oral history of one of the most important movements in United States history," as stated by Niani Kilkenny, Director of the Smithsonian Institution's Program in African American Culture.

"Passages to Freedom" was a joint endeavor of the National Museum of American History and the National Underground Freedom Center, in collaboration with the National Park Service (NPS). The event was held at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History Behring Center. Over the course of the conference's seven sessions, scholars, private and public preservation practitioners, and interpreters presented varied interpretations of the UGRR: as a means of resistance, placed within an international, diasporic context, and as a powerful part of American mythology.

Sessions on the first day of the conference featured noted scholars. "Follow the Drinking Gourd: Underground Railroad in Legends and Lore" explored the issue of how we can know about the Underground Railroad. In particu-

lar, use of oral traditions to illuminate Underground Railroad history and the means of evaluating them were presented by Milton Sernett, John Michael Vlach, and Judith Wellman. African American agency in the struggle for freedom and self-determination was the focus of "Freedom Over Me: African American Resistance and the Underground Railroad." This session, with presentations by Wilma King, Carol Wilson, Hilary Russell, and Freddie Parker, illuminated the role of children, free blacks, and freedom seekers themselves, in escaping enslavement.

"I Want to Cross Over: The International Context for the Underground Railroad" drew attention to the broader context of the Underground Railroad and the need to examine where freedom seekers settled in order to understand the movement. Jane Landers, Ron Tyler, Jane Rhodes, and Kevin Mulroy shared material on resistance in Spanish Florida, Mexico, and Canada, and discussed the international diplomacy skills of Seminole maroon communities.

The session "Trouble the Water: Interpreting and Presenting the Underground Railroad, A Public History Roundtable" facilitated by James Horton, sought to address the issue of the UGRR's mythology and historicity as it relates to public sites through a series of questions posed to the panel. The session opened with a welcome from David Blight, who set the stage for a discussion of the tension between myth and reality as it plays out in the public history arena.

The session "... 'Sounds Within My Soul': Pioneers in Underground Railroad Research and Collecting" brought together community advocates who have been preserving the history of the Underground Railroad for decades. These researchers spoke of their passion

for, and the importance of, this story while explaining how they came to devote so much of their lives to it. Panelists included Charles Blockson, whose scholarship and extensive collection are largely responsible for the resurgence of interest in the Underground Railroad.

The conference concluded with a session by Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Songs and Singing in the Struggle for Freedom and Survival during the Era of Slavery in the United States of America." This presentation mixed a capella renditions of many well-known songs performed by Dr. Johnson Reagon with analysis of their meaning. She also discussed historically and culturally accurate versions of many songs.

The conference was a part of the Smithsonian Institution's Program in African American Culture's Annual African American History Month Observance.

For more information on the Program in African American Culture, visit the website at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/paac/>

The new African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa will exhibit and interpret the state's African American history. Photo courtesy of Kristine Chiafos.

STATE INITIATIVES

New Building for Iowa African American Museum

Pam Edwards
The African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa

The African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa will open its new facility in Cedar Rapids during the summer of 2003. Iowa's forgotten black history—such as the enslaved African American York on the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Underground Railroad exploits, Iowa's 1867 lawsuit desegregating its schools, and the Civil Rights ferment of the 1960s and 1970s—will be exhibited.

Founded in 1994 by members of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Cedar Rapids, the African American Historical Museum quickly outgrew its

original concept as a local history collection. The upcoming grand opening will reveal a 17,000 square foot museum that will explore Iowa's black history through exhibitions, educational programming, and the Iowa Communications Network—a state-owned fiber optic link connecting Iowa's educational institutions and libraries.

While past indifference has regrettably allowed invaluable historical artifacts to be lost, the Museum's staff is now working to preserve as much as possible statewide. In addition, exhibition artifacts borrowed from other museums include slave shackles, a Civil War projectile, and a desk used in the South Carolina statehouse during Reconstruction.

For more information, contact Executive Director Joseph McGill, Jr. at PO Box 1626, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406. Phone: 319/862-2101, e-mail: valjoe@aol.com or curator Susan Kuecker at grahamjames@mcleod.net.

